



DOES YOUR MOOD CHANGE WITH THE SEASON?

Perhaps someone close to you always seems to have a downward swing in mood this time of year, or maybe you've felt that way yourself. You may call it the holiday blues or the winter blahs or something like that. You don't worry; you know the feeling will pass.

That's the way it usually works. But these struggles and emotional pains are real, and they can become serious enough to prevent people from enjoying life the way they want to. The better you understand these feelings, the better equipped you are to deal with them and to get help if you need it. Here are a few things you should know.

- » **Seasonal Affective Disorder:** Some people who are emotionally healthy for most of the year may show signs of depression during a change in the season. They suffer from seasonal affective disorder or SAD. Most of those affected have an emotional downturn during the winter. In more rare cases people experience SAD in the transition to spring, summer or the fall. The effects of SAD may be mild and usually pass with a change in season, but they also can develop into severe, long-term problems.

It's generally believed that exposure to "too little" or "too much" sunlight is a factor in SAD. Treatments range from regular exercise to artificial light to medication. You'll find more information on seasonal affective disorder on the MHN member website under Emotional Health.

- » **Beware of Holiday Stress:** The holidays are meant to be joyous times, and usually they are. But they also can be stressful. With shopping, hosting guest, preparing for parties, traveling and other obligations all going on at the same time, you may be overwhelmed. If you feel you need a breather, make time to take one. Work in some exercise and make sure to get enough sleep. For advice on dealing with stress, look under Emotional Health > Stress.

- » **Memory and Emotional Pain:** Someone who is still grieving after suffering a loss may find this time of year particularly difficult. It may be the first holiday season without someone he loved, or the turning of the calendar to a new year may only focus his mind on the possibility of another 12 months of loneliness. MHN's member website has helpful information on coping with grief under Emotional Health > Greif & Loss.

Problems with personal finances are frequent causes of stress at the end of the year. You may worry that holiday expenses will make money problems worse. Perhaps your informal year-end assessment of family finances shows you'll start the New Year in a deep hole. If you're facing these kinds of financial challenges, your EAP can help you find solutions. Just call to connect with a counselor who can:

- » Work with you to budget for the holidays and beyond
- » Help you make better decisions about credit card debt
- » Organize documents and information you'll need to do your taxes
- » Set your financial planning priorities for the coming year

These and other financial services are available to you as an EAP member. Call today to get the assistance you need.

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There may be other reasons why you feel a sense of dread when the calendar reaches its tail end. Whatever the cause, help is available if it's more than you can handle. Call your EAP anytime, 24/7.

This article is for informational and self-help purposes only. It should not be treated as a substitute for financial, medical, psychiatric, psychological or behavioral health care advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a qualified professional.

Call any time for a telephonic consultation.

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